

P57.36**A neo-Epicurean approach to a sustainable good life in a world of climate change***Edward Howlett Spence**University of Twente, Philosophy Department, Enschede, The Netherlands*

Empty is that philosopher's argument by which no human suffering is therapeutically treated. For just as there is no use in a medical art that does not cast out the sicknesses of the body, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out the suffering of the soul. Epicurus This presentation will explore how Epicurus' philosophy of pleasure can provide a way of approaching sustainability and in particular a sustainable good life under political, social, and ethical conditions imposed by climate change, in an increasingly technological world. An Epicurean approach is both interesting but more importantly instructive in providing a guide for understanding the problem of sustainability under the constraints of climate change as well as offering a framework for its solution, within the context of a sustainable good life, both for individuals and societies at large. Given my limited knowledge of the issue of sustainability I will with some caution explain the problem of sustainability as the problem of sustaining our current level of lifestyles, principally in terms of consumption both as individuals and as a societies worldwide, in terms of at least five variables:

1. ever-diminishing natural resources;
2. increase of pollution to the biosphere including an increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere;
3. the increase of the consumption of energy per capita in the form of fossil fuels to maintain our level of lifestyles; and
4. an increase in world population, which impacts on variables 1 and 2 and 3; and last but not least,
5. climate change that impacts on all the above variables.

If I am at least partly right in offering this initial rather simplistic account of the problem of sustainability, there are in principle at least two main approaches to solving the problem of sustainability and that of the related and equally important problem of a sustainable good life under constraints of climate change (POS, henceforth). For any solution to sustainability must also address the crucial issue of what constitutes a sustainable good life. For insofar as in the past the issue of sustainability and that of the good life (what constitutes a good life generally conceived in philosophical, ethical, social and psychological terms) could have been perceived as two conceptually distinct and practical issues that could have been dealt with separately and independently of each other, that is no longer the case. The two main approaches to solving the problem of sustainability and that of the related problem of a sustainable good life under conditions of climate change (POS) referred to above are at least the following. One is an externalist approach (EA), the other an internalist approach (IA). I define the EA as one that seeks to find an external solution to the problem of sustainability primarily through science and technology and the IA as one that seeks to find a solution to POS through targeting the consumers themselves both individually and collectively as societies. Specifically, IA targets the consumers by targeting their hedonic desires. In particular, the desires that people seek to satisfy in pursuing lifestyles of pleasure and a good life broadly understood. Epicurean philosophy which locates the good and wellbeing of individuals primarily in pleasure, conceived by Epicureans as the highest good conducive to the attainment of eudemonia, wellbeing or happiness, is particularly well suited in offering a framework with regard to an IA solution. Note, however, that the EA and the IA are not incompatible and can, as my argument will support, be combined together in offering practical solutions to POS. Before proceeding in examining an Epicurean approach to an internalist solution to POS, the paper will first outline at least three essential conditions that any solution to POS either internalist or externalist, must meet:

1.1 The Hedonic Condition Any theory offering a solution to POS must be capable of appealing to and addressing the hedonic desires of actual instrumentally rational agents. This is essential in providing adequate rational and psychological motivation capable of motivating actual agents to at least feel pre-disposed to act favourably towards a solution to POS. Any theory either internalist or externalist that cannot address or appeal to the agent's desires, at least in principle, would lack motivation and would thus be impractical in offering a solution to POS.

1.2 The Ethical Condition Insofar as we are rationally required to act ethically towards others on the basis of any number of ethical theories, which if not individually at least collectively, render that ethical requirement persuasive if not overriding, then any solution to POS must also be consistent with ethical principles

generally conceived. It must negatively not cause unjustified harm to people (it must not be malevolent) and it must moreover where possible positively produce good for people (it must be benevolent).

1.3 The Eudemonic Condition Insofar as instrumentally rational agents desire a good life as a means to the attainment of self-fulfilment or wellbeing or happiness, which I shall collectively refer to here as Eudemonia, any theory that offers a solution to POS must also address and meet the eudemonic condition. For if it cannot meet it, that theory is impractical and therefore inadequate in appealing to the instrumental and prudential considerations of actual agents. In summary, any solution to POS, be it externalist or internalist, must address and meet to some degree at least all the above three conditions. The best solution is one that can integrate all three conditions within its theoretical framework. Can Epicureanism or a Neo-Epicureanism as adjusted and adapted to address the central issues of a sustainable good life in today's technological world, achieve this? I will affirm positively but cautiously that it may be able to do so. At least I will offer the groundwork for such a Neo-Epicurean theory with the proviso that it is only a work-in-progress theory that may require further refinement and fine-tuning.

Based on those three conditions, the paper will postulate and seek support for two interrelated theses:

- A: Any solution to POS must be consistent and allow for a conception of a sustainable good life under conditions of climate change, generally conceived. A solution to POS be it externalist or internalist that was not capable of promoting a reasonable conception of a good life, one that most rational agents could accept and adopt as reasonable, would lack adequate motivation in persuading individuals and societies to rationally adopt such a solution and would thus be impractical. Purely externalist solutions to POS that fail to address agents' desires directly would prove impractical in just this way and thus prove unsuccessful. Therefore it is necessary that any practical solution to POS must address peoples' desires both individually and collectively as societies, as these are directly relevant to any conception of a good life.
- B: Furthermore, a solution to POS must also be capable of addressing and meeting the three conditions outlined above, namely, the hedonic, the ethical and the eudemonic. For purely hedonistic solutions to POS that, for example, fail to meet the ethical condition would be objectionable and thus unacceptable, once more proving impractical. Similarly, solutions to POS that addressed the ethical condition but failed to address the hedonic condition would also prove impractical in lacking adequate motivation.